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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY
OF ENGLISH OPINION OF GER-
MAN LITERATURE. I.*

GILLIES AND THE FOREIGN QUAR-
TERLY REVIEW.

It is generally held that Thomas Carlyle re-awakened interest in German Literature after it had declined for more than a decade.¹ It has been overlooked, however,² that contemporary with him and even antedating him by a few years Robert Pearse Gillies (1788-1858) was active in translating and reviewing a considerable number of works that had appeared in Germany only a short time before. Gillies, "a sort of Scottish Crabb Robinson,"³ was known to Carlyle, who considered him "a great German scholar,"⁴ to Wordsworth, who corresponded with and addressed a sonnet to him,⁵ and to Walter Scott, who, in a letter dated June, 1826, suggested to him the founding of a journal for reviewing foreign literature.⁶ To carry out this plan Gillies left Edinburgh for London (February, 1827), where he founded the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (pub. 1827-46, when it was incorporated with the *Westminster Review*). He was to assume the editorship, but, for reasons to be stated presently, was prevented from doing so.

A word of correction in regard to this editorship may be inserted here. In his *Memoirs* (iii, 150 *et pas.*) Gillies speaks of himself as editor, and many writers since have repeated his statement without questioning it. Karl Elze (*Sir Walter Scott*, 1864, ii, 196), J. G.

* I shall publish, as soon as feasible, a series of studies on "English and American Opinion of German Literature," suggested to me by my esteemed teacher, Prof. von Klenze, to whom I am besides indebted for much valuable advice.

¹ W. Streuli, *Thomas Carlyle als Vermittler deutscher Litteratur und deutschen Geistes*, 1895, p. 23 ff.

² Weddigen, *Herrigs Archiv*, lix, 159; Perry, *Atlantic Monthly*, xl, 129; Leslie Stephen, *Studies of a Biographer*, 1899 ("The Importation of German."), p. 38 ff.

³ H. A. Page, *Thomas de Quincey*, i, 186.

⁴ Letter to Alex. Carlyle, March 2, 1824 (*Early Letters*, ed. Norton).

⁵ Gillies, *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, 1851, ii, 145 ff., and Wordsworth, *Poet, Works*, ed. Morley, 539.

⁶ "It has often struck me that a quarterly account of foreign literature, mixed with good translations, and spirited views of the progress of knowledge on the Continent might make a regular and reasonable, though not a large income. . . . You are eminently qualified, in many respects, for such a task." *Memoirs of a Lit. Vet.*, iii, 143.

Lockhart, (*Life of Scott*, 1869, ix, 73), F. Ebert (Walter Scott, 1871, ii, 187), R. H. Stoddard (*Personal Reminiscences by Constable and Gillies*, 1876, p. xxvii), *Lippincott's Pronouncing Biog. Dict.* (1886), Francis Watt (*Dict. Nat. Biog.* xxi, 369), Allibone's *Dict. of Authors* (1897), R. E. Prothero (*Byron's Letters and Journals*, ii, 338, foot-note), these and others state that Gillies was the first editor of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*. On the other hand, the *Catalogue of the Brit. Mus.* (Period. Publ., pt. iii, 543), and H. R. Tedder (*Dict. Nat. Biog.* xi, 163), name J. G. Cochrane as the first editor. How can this discrepancy be explained? Had the above named writers looked into *Notes and Queries*, 1859 (2d. Ser., viii, 127), they would not have reiterated an untruth for so many decades. They would have seen the following plain statement by John Macray, a regular contributor to the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, and a lifelong associate of Cochrane. The note runs thus:

"It was originally intended that Mr. R. P. Gillies should be the editor of the F. Q. R.; but other occupations having prevented that gentleman from devoting adequate time and attention to the arduous duties connected with a new periodical from which so much was expected, Mr. Cochrane . . . stepped forward, and saved the infant periodical from threatened delay and difficulty."

The question of editorship having been disposed of, we may turn our attention to Gillies' opinion of German literature as expressed in his contributions to the *Foreign Quarterly Review* during the years 1827-28. According to John Macray (*loc. cit.*) the following articles are from his pen: "Ahasver, a Tragedy by August Klingemann" (i, 565-95); "Taschenbücher für 1828" (i, 641-46); "Heine's Reisebilder" (ii, 370-71); "Heinrich [von] Kleist's Gesammelte Schriften," "Tieck's Dramaturgische Blätter" (ii, 671-96); "Van der Veldt's Lebenslauf und Briefe" (iii, 318); and "Grabbe's Dramatische Dichtungen" (iii, 319).⁷ A glance at the list of titles reveals the interesting fact that Heine,⁸ Kleist⁹ and

⁷ "Ernst Schultze's Werke" (i, 333) is by G. Moir, not by Gillies, as Poole's *Index* indicates.

⁸ L. P. Betz, *Heine in Frankreich*, 1895, p. 44 ff.

⁹ F. Lloyd and W. Newton, *Prussia's Representative Man*, 1875, p. 14, claim that Kleist remained unknown because he was not metaphysical.

Grabbe, all of whom Carlyle knew scarcely by name, were read and understood in England even before the French had become acquainted with them.¹⁰

Before discussing Klingemann's *Ahasver*, Gillies gives a short résumé of the modern German drama. He states that the great change in German literature, which may be dated from the appearance of Goethe's *Götz* (1773),¹¹ had been in preparation from about the year 1760, when Lessing commenced in good earnest his dramatic labors. The next individual, says Gillies, who made any remarkable advance in the same pursuit was not Goethe, as is commonly supposed, but Gerstenberg, whose *Ugolino* is a unique, however faulty, performance. Goethe as a dramatist, he adds, remains even at the present hour little better understood and appreciated in England than Klinger . . . and Lessing, whose names are seldom mentioned. Gillies is under the impression that the ardent and impetuous genius of Klinger had a great influence on the author of *Faust*. The next genius of importance in dramatic literature was Schiller, the *facile princeps* of German dramatists. Gillies considers *Don Carlos* his most finished composition. Kotzebue's dramas, he continues, which were at one time valued greatly beyond their desert, have of late years been proportionably underrated. Among the pre-eminently deserving dramatists since 1810, Gillies mentions in one breath such men as Müllner, Grillparzer, Klingemann, Werner, Heinrich Collin, Körner, Tieck, Kind, Fouqué, Houwald, H. Kleist, Raupach, Immermann, Heine, Carol. Pichler, Uhland, Zschokke, Kruse, etc. Turning to Klingemann, Gillies says of his *Faust*: In its own style it is admirable, and yet bears no other resemblance to Goethe's work but that of bearing the same title. Then he sketches the plot of *Ahasver*,¹² interspersing it with translations, but omits one-third of the Wandering Jew's narrative, because the language, by the introduction of

sacred allusions, is rendered exceedingly unsuitable even for the German stage. Klingemann's production, continues the reviewer, is not a fair specimen of modern German tragedy. It was its singularity which first attracted our attention, and we were induced to review it as a "psychological curiosity" . . . which naturally awakened a thousand interesting associations of spectral agency, mouldering old castles, dark interminable forests, etc. For our next article on the German theatre, Gillies says in closing, we need only turn to the names of Müllner, Grillparzer,¹³ Houwald and Raupach, in order to be reminded of dramatists who unite with impassioned eloquence a propriety of incident and character such as may satisfy the most fastidious critic. We may observe in concluding that one of the most extraordinary characters of this class in Germany, the late H. [von] Kleist, remains yet unknown even by name in England, while his *Prince of Homburg*, *Catherine of Heilbronn*, *Family of Schroffenstein*, etc., are extolled by Ludwig Tieck as models of dramatic composition.

The following year, as already indicated, Gillies introduced Kleist to the English public. He believed that Tieck overrated Kleist's posthumous works and that he went too far when he treated with severe censure or contempt almost every author who had risen to distinction within the last ten or fifteen years. Gillies wished to protest against Tieck's wholesale condemnation of the works of Houwald and others, for these modern compositions, says he, are often very beautiful and far from being inconsistent with nature. According to him, Kleist had the feelings of a poet, but in many respects wanted the due "accomplishments of art." He gives a short sketch of Kleist's life and character, because he believes it the best explanatory introduction to the *Prince of Homburg*. Then he adds: Having already noticed his [Kleist's] impatience and irritability, the reader will not expect that his language should be highly wrought, or his poetic adornments elaborate. Nor, having observed how capricious, dreamy and versa-

¹⁰ Süpffe, *Gesch. d. d. Kultureinflusses auf Frankreich*, 1886-90, II, ii, 14 ff, 38 and note 47.

¹¹ In the course of this introduction Gillies makes one of his careless statements when he declares that in the year 1773, Goethe, who had already acquired high reputation by his *Werter*, came before the public with his *Goetz of Berlichingen*.

¹² Cf. Carlyle's scathing criticism of this play and the *Faust* in his essay on "German Playwrights."

¹³ Even Carlyle (*ibid.*) does not hesitate to put Grillparzer in the same category with Müllner and Klingemann.

tile was his own mind, can we be surprised that he should have designed for the stage a character such as, in real earnest, never was exhibited there before. Gillies then sketches the plot of the *Prince of Homburg*, interspersing it, as was his custom, with translations of monologues and striking scenes, and comments thus on the fourth act: The conception is good, but the dialogue throughout is faulty; more especially in scenes which ought to be impassioned, it is lamentably tame. Yet this is the style of writing which Mr. Tieck would exalt in opposition to that of Müllner, Grillparzer, Raupach, Houwald and others. In summing up his opinion of the whole play, he says curiously enough: Whatever are its merits, Mr. Tieck may rest assured that compositions of this kind never will pass muster along with those of Müllner, Houwald, Raupach and other living authors whom he is disposed to condemn. The reviewer finds fault also with *Familie Schroffenstein*, of which he says: It is a dark picture from the Middle Ages, in which is displayed much vigor with a deplorable want of tact and judgment. He recognizes the beauties of *Catherine of Heilbronn*, calls it exalting and affecting, but concludes that though it keeps its place on the stage, it is extremely unequal and defective. *Michael Kohlhaas* he considers Kleist's greatest success and wonders why this narrative and the *Beggar of Locarno*¹⁴ have not found their way into some of those collections of German romances that have been published in this country [England].

In two short articles of the same year (1828), Gillies characterizes in a fair way the works of Grabbe and Heine. Of the former he says: Whatever the faults of Mr. Grabbe's productions may be, in other respects, that they are novel and original must be allowed in all conscience. He is of the opinion that Grabbe possesses talents such as, with proper cultivation, may enable him to correct and avoid the extravagancies into which over-impetuosity and the determination to be original have betrayed him. Heine's prose and verse he finds lively and entertaining, and ventures to predict of the author that he may one day make a considerable figure in the world.

Gillies discovers passages here and there which prove that Mr. Heine is perfectly able to adopt a higher tone when he thinks proper to

use the requisite exertion. This is particularly indicated by his poetry. As the matter now stands, Gillies continues, Mr. Heine has (very unintentionally perhaps [!]) given much offence to many people by his facetious levity of style, and satirical illustrations of character, so that his book has been actually proscribed in the Austrian and Prussian states! Even the hasty notice of Göttingen [in *Die Harzreise*] has, we believe, been severely censured. . . . Heine has afforded us excellent descriptions, varied by humorous sketches of character from the society which he happened to encounter on his route.

Gillies, as can be readily seen, is not always trustworthy in his literary judgments. While he shows good discriminative power in recognizing earlier than almost any other man in England the genius of Heine and Grabbe, he errs woefully when he asserts the superiority of Klingemann's or Müllner's dramas over those of Heinrich von Kleist. His opinions of other German authors and works will be discussed in a study at some future time.

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NOTES ON SIR GAWAYNE AND THE GREEN KNIGHT.¹

a. Lines 143-4.

For of bak & of brest al were his bodi sturne,
Bot his wombe & his wast were worthily smale.

For the *Bot* in the second line read *Both*:

¹ In the *Modern Language Quarterly* for November, 1897, page 52, I published notes on four passages of *Sir Gawayne*, and as the edition of that periodical was a very limited one and copies of it are no longer obtainable, I may perhaps be allowed to mention them here.—(a) In line 427, *pe sayre hede fro pe halce hit [felle] to pe erpe*, I proposed to omit the *felle*, which is not in the MS., and to take *hit* as the verb = 'came' (cp. now *Englische Studien* xxvi, 403).—(b) Line 1281, *& ay pe lady let lyk, a hym loued mych*, I translated 'And ever the lady acted (feigned) as though she loved him much.'—(c) In line 1399 *Wyth lotes pat were to lowe*, I explained *lowe*, which the rhymes show cannot be N.E. *low*, as an aphetized form of the verb *ulowen* 'to praise:' 'With words (behaviour) that were (was) to be praised.'—(d) In line 1451 I pointed out that *inu-melle* does not mean 'in the conflict,' but is equivalent to the ordinary M.E. *imelle*, from O. Norse *i milli*, used here adverbially with a temporal meaning: 'and maims the pack at the same time.' With regard to the puzzling word *capados* (lines 186 and 572) it may be worth while recording that in *Notes and Queries*, 9th series, iv, 308 (Oct. 14, 1899), Mr. F. Amours quotes from the Old French *Frerabras* 612, where, in the description of a gambison, mention is made of *Cuir de Capadoce*, and he suggests that "Sir Gawayne's gambison was doubtless of Cappadocian leather, hence its name." He also points out that Froissart speaks of *cuir bouilli de Capadoce*. In Godefroy's small Old French Dictionary ed. Bonnard and Salmon *capadoce* is explained as "éttoffe de Cappadoce."

¹⁴ By classing this story with *Michael Kohlhaas* Gillies betrays, here as elsewhere, lack of sound literary judgment.